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WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK CELEBRATED

SAN SALVADOR- Under the slogan, “Support to mothers: by building success everybody wins,” the World Breastfeeding Week was inaugurated this morning to raise awareness on the importance of the breastfeeding practice in the country.

Since 2006 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), through its Strengthening Health and Education Program, has invested around \$174,000 in activities to support the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS) to foster, promote and protect the breastfeeding practice.

To celebrate World Breastfeeding Week, USAID and MSPAS have partnered with the Salvadoran Institute of Social Security (ISSS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

During the inauguration ceremony, representatives from those institutions presented accreditation and reaccreditation plaques that certify health units as “Mother/Child Friendly” (USANYM, in Spanish) and hospitals as “Child Friendly” (IHAN, in Spanish). These initiatives seek to strengthen and broaden activities to promote, support and protect mother-child nutrition during pregnancy, breastfeeding, and early childhood.

According to reports by UNICEF, breast milk provides a child with ideal and complete food during the first six months of life. Moreover, breast milk continues to be the best dairy source during the first two years when combined with other food. Advantages of breastfeeding include: intellectual development and visual sharpness in children; health protection as risks to suffer from infectious diseases are reduced or these are less frequent and less severe in children; stimulated maxillofacial development and cavity prevention; mother-child bonding, and protection of woman’s health as breast suction immediately after labor can reduce the risk of suffering from post-partum hemorrhage, favoring uterine contraction and reducing anemia.

Recognizing the importance of breastfeeding, USAID promotes this practice through: community-based counseling strategies under the Integrated Nutrition Care system (AIN-C); accreditation of health units and hospitals under the USANYM and IHAN initiatives; opening of counseling clinics and mother shelters in hospitals in Santa Ana, Sonsonate, San Rafael, Maternidad, Zacamil, Cojutepeque, Suchitoto, San Vicente, Illobasco, Usulutan, Jiquilisco and Santiago de Maria; promotion of the draft bill to foster, promote and protect the breastfeeding practice, as well as evaluation of feeding guidelines that describe breastfeeding as the first and best food for newborns.

World Breastfeeding Week is an initiative of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA). Every year, WABA gives gold, silver and bronze medals to organizations that support the breastfeeding practice worldwide.

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